

HAWORTH MOOR GROUSE POINTING TEST

Judges: Phil Pearson and Penny Pickstone

By kind permission of Mr J.D.Standevan and the Haworth Moor Syndicate

Date: 28th July 2018

Gradings:

Excellent

Questor Alder	GSP	Janice Hawkes
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Very Good

Sigourney Safara	GSP	Steve Robson
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Good

Quintana Cloud Berry	GSP	Paul Nixon
Quintana Qin Qiao	GSP	Maureen Nixon
Stubblemere Guthrie	GSP	Fleur Fillingham
Tournesol Iagan	Brit	John Wordsworth

Judges Critique

2018 will go into the record books and for those of us who work dogs, for all the wrong reasons. Extreme heat does not suit us, but more importantly, does not suit grouse, as the low populations on UK moors this year will testify. On some of the moors I know, the first broods did not survive. It was therefore extremely generous of the estate and the keeper to allow this day to go ahead.

To the conditions first. On 27th July, the weather broke, so the very young grouse (presumed 2nd broods) had to put up with drenching rain and strongish hot winds. As we met in the morning, it chucked it down for 20 minutes, a mix of rain and hail, before easing off giving us a mild, mainly overcast day, with strong winds, with only one other 10 minutes or so of rain and hail well into the afternoon.

Scenting conditions varied considerably throughout the day, often low and short, sometimes non-existent as the dogs' bewilderment at times showed, occasionally long. This moor can only be worked in a particular way because of its shape and location, so the dogs had a cheek wind throughout.

Some general observations: the birds were widely scattered, the broods small, the young birds very young indeed. To find, dogs needed to get way out, and work the ground accurately, plus handlers needed to keep quiet. Too much whistle did more harm than good, plus on quite a few occasions, interrupted the dog's pattern and concentration and forced back casts and missed ground.

To avoid any damage to these young birds, Juniors were instructed to put leads on their dogs when they came into point and work the point out on lead. Not very satisfactory but needs must.

There were 12 dogs running, 9 Juniors and 3 Adults. Of these, 6 were graded – one Excellent, one Very Good, and four Good.

Graded Excellent:

Questor Alder - Adult

Dog flowed over the ground, taking very long casts, accurate to wind and territory. The handler was almost completely silent. The dog came into a scent area which she worked out with great care and attention to detail, finding and producing a pheasant in thick heather. Working on, she lifted her head, indicated birds some 40 yards above her up the hillside, which she then pointed and produced. A class piece of work in exceptionally difficult conditions.

Graded Very Good:

Sigourney Safara - Junior

Very long outrun, as conditions dictated, handler commendably silent. Worked ground back, took scent, solid point to produce a covey of 8 birds. A nice piece of work.

Graded Good:

Quintana Cloud Berry - Junior

This dog ran number 1, an area entirely devoid of anything but sheep and leverets. Albeit puzzled, and a little thrown by the clear preponderance of ground scent, she worked her ground out with persistence. On her second run however, she came into grouse, a covey of 9 somewhat jumpy adults, which she found and pointed and held her ground even though the birds lifted almost as she came to them.

Quintana Qin Qiao - Junior

This dog took a while to get going on her first run, looking as though she expected to get straight into game, but on this day and in these conditions, persistence and diligence and covering to a distance were needed to find. On her second run, she was rewarded by finding fairly quickly, a cheeper which had run out of bare ground into heather, and was startled by the dog, flying up into her face as she came into point.

Stubblemere Guthrie - Adult

Dog's ground was on a rise at the foot of a hill. She took off like a rocket, came straight into scent at the edge of some thickish heather, pointed to produce a couple of cheepers and was clearly in the middle of a covey of same – no sign of the parents. A short run but did all that was needed.

Tournesol Iagan - Adult

Diligent and careful dog, and although clearly not used to the ground, and sometimes struggling in deep heather, stuck to the task, and was rewarded by taking scent on the hill above which he worked out, found, pointed and produced. A pleasure to see a dog this determined but working for and with his handler.

End note: The difficulty of the conditions cannot be emphasised enough, but HPRs are made to learn from same and then to succeed, when handled with intelligence and understanding. GPTs are in many ways the epitome of HPR work, and the rewards (sorry to be a purist) are in what the dogs learn rather than the grading.

Many thanks to the keeper, Paul, for his time, scrupulous management and company, to Mr J.D.Standevan and the Haworth Moor Syndicate our hosts for the day, and to the GSPC for looking after us, and giving us the opportunity to judge dogs on such testing ground.

P.J.Pickstone